

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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R 171500Z AUG 78

FM AMEMBASSY LA PAZ

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2212

INFO AMEMBASSY LIMA

AMEMBASSY QUITO

AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

DIA WASHDC

USCINCSO J2 QUARRY HEIGHTS CZ

C O N F I D E N T I A L LA PAZ 6629

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PGOV, BL

SUBJECT: BANZER COMMENTS ON ELECTIONS AND CANDIDATES

BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED

1. IN BRIEF REMARKS WHILE ENROUTE TO COCHABAMBA, FORMER PRESIDENT HUGO BANZER TOLD A GROUP OF REPORTERS THAT HE FAVORS ELECTIONS "IN ONE YEAR MINIMUM (MINIMO A UN AÑO PLAZO)." BOLIVIAN OPINION IS SPLIT WHETHER BANZER MEANT THAT ELECTIONS SHOULD TAKE PLACE WITHIN ONE YEAR AT THE LATEST OR NOT BEFORE ONE YEAR AT THE EARLIEST.

2. BANZER PROPOSED THAT NO ONE WHO HAS SERVED AS EITHER CONSTITUTIONAL, DE FACTO OR INTERIM PRESIDENT OR VICE PRESIDENT SHOULD BE A CANDIDATE FOR ANY ELECTIVE OFFICE IN THE UPCOMING ELECTIONS. BANZER ALSO PROPOSED THAT NO ACTING OR SEMI-RETIRED MILITARY OFFICER (A SORT OF HALF-WAY POINT IN THE BOLIVIAN MILITARY BETWEEN ACTIVE AND RETIRED STATUS) SHOULD BE A CANDIDATE "TO THE EXTENT POSSIBLE."

3. BANZER STATED THAT "THE COUNTRY IS IN NEED OF THE IDEOLOGICAL AD-
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HESION OF THO 3 WHO BELIEVE IN AND PRACTICE NATIONALISM, LEAVING ASIDE PARTISANSHIP, PERSONALITIES AND ANIMOSITIES, WHICH REQUIRE THEIR RENUNCIATION IN THE INTEREST OF THE COUNTRY."
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4. COMMENT: BANZER'S PROPOSAL THAT NO FORMER PRESIDENT OR

VICE PRESIDENT OR ACTIVE OR SEMI-RETIRED MILITARY OFFICER RUN FOR OFFICE IN THE UPCOMING ELECTIONS REPORTEDLY HAS SUPPORT FROM THE ARMED FORCES. IN PUBLICLY MAKING THIS PROPOSAL, AND THIS APPARENTLY DISQUALIFYING HIMSELF FROM THE PRESIDENTIAL RACE, BANZER ALSO SEEMS TO BE TAKING A HIGH ROAD OF STATESMANSHIP "IN THE INTEREST OF THE COUNTRY." HOWEVER, BANZER KNOWS THAT HIS PROPOSAL WOULD ALSO ELIMINATE VICTOR PAZ, HERNAN SILES, AND RENE BERNAL FROM THE UPCOMING PRESIDENTIAL RACE. THE EMBASSY HAS BEEN TOLD THAT THE MNR-H WILL SOON PUBLICLY REJECT BANZER'S PROPOSAL BECAUSE IT WANTS TO RUN VICTORR PAZ FOR PRESIDENT AGAIN. SILES' UDP WILL UNDOUBTEDLY ALSO REJECT THE PLAN FOR THE SAME REASON. THOUGH IT MAY NOT DO SO UNTIL SILES RETURNS FROM THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC, WHERE HE IS ATTENDING THE PRESIDENTIAL INAUGURATION. THE PDC MAY ALSO REJECT THE BANZER PROPOSAL. BANZER VERY PROBABLY EXPECTS SUCH A REACTION FROM THE POLITICAL PARTIES. WITH HIS PLAN REJECTED, BANZER'S OWN CANDIDACY, OF COURSE, AGAIN BECOMES A POSSIBILITY, AND BANZER CAN CLAIM TO BOTH THE PUBLIC AND THE ARMED FORCES TO HAVE TRIED TO TAKE THE HIGH ROAD, ONLY TO BE REJECTED BY THE POLITICAL PARTIES. BOEKER

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